

REMARKS

Claims 2-24 and 26-28 are now pending in the application. By this Paper, Claim 26 has been amended to correct a typographical error. The basis for the foregoing amendment can be found throughout the specification, claims, and drawings originally filed. No new matter has been added. The preceding amendment and the following remarks are believed to be fully responsive to the outstanding Office Action and are believed to place the application in condition for allowance. The Examiner is respectfully requested to reconsider and withdraw the rejections in view of the amendment and remarks contained herein.

REJECTIONS UNDER 35 U.S.C. § 102

Claims 26-28 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by Muir et al. (U.S. Pat. No. 6,251,660). This rejection is respectfully traversed.

Applicants note that independent Claims 26 recites, in part, that connection portions of each pair of adjacent chamber portions are formed into a male or female shape mated with each other with friction contact, and the adjacent chamber portions along the row are slidable relative to each other. Independent Claim 27 recites, in part, that at least one intermediate chamber portion and a further end chamber portion are connected in a row and slidable relative to each other. Applicants respectfully submit that Muir et al. fail to disclose or suggest adjacent chamber portions being slidable relative to each other.

While Figure 13 of Muir et al. discloses a male portion engaging a female portion, Muir et al. do not disclose the male and female portions being slidable relative to each

other. In fact, Muir et al. describe the male and female portions being joined to each other “by welding or use of adhesives or adequately tight push fit or by other known means such that both the inner diameters of the two compartments are maintained approximately contiguously.” See Muir at Col. 27, Ins. 58-62. Clearly, if the male and female portions were joined by welding or an adhesive, the male and female portions would be prevented from sliding relative to each other, contrary to Claims 26 and 27. Even if the male and female portions were joined by a “tight push fit,” the inner diameters of the male and female portions would not be maintained contiguously with each other if they were slidable relative to each other. Therefore, Applicants respectfully submit that Muir et al. fail to disclose each and every element of independent Claims 26 and 27.

In light of the foregoing, Applicants respectfully submit that independent Claims 26 and 27, as well as Claim 28, which is dependent upon Claim 27, are in condition for allowance. Reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejections are respectfully requested.

ALLOWED CLAIMS

Applicants gratefully acknowledge allowed Claims 2-24.

CONCLUSION

It is believed that all of the stated grounds of rejection have been properly traversed, accommodated, or rendered moot. Applicants therefore respectfully request that the Examiner reconsider and withdraw all presently outstanding rejections. It is believed that a full and complete response has been made to the outstanding Office Action and the present application is in condition for allowance. Thus, prompt and favorable consideration of this amendment is respectfully requested. If the Examiner believes that personal communication will expedite prosecution of this application, the Examiner is invited to telephone the undersigned at (248) 641-1600.

Respectfully submitted,

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